

**DECISION RECORD
EARTHQUAKE FUELS PROJECT
IN CHURCHILL COUNTY, NEVADA**

**Environmental Assessment
DOI-BLM-NV-C010-2011-0520-EA**

BACKGROUND

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Stillwater Field Office (SFO) has determined to implement the Earthquake Fuels Project located on public lands in Churchill County, Nevada. The cycle of wildfire and annual weed invasion has: disrupted proper ecosystem function; increased the size, intensity and frequency of wildfire; and reduced plant and animal diversity. These losses are accelerating and costly, not only in loss and endangerment of species and ecosystems, but also in risks to human life and property and in public and private expenditures associated with wildfires.

The project area was burned in the Sand Springs wildfire (17,437 acres), in July of 1999. Due to the rugged terrain, the very unpredictable nature of the fire behavior, and considering firefighter safety, direct attack opportunities are limited in this country. A strategic passive fuels treatment will supplement firefighting efforts, making indirect suppression tactics more effective. Since 1992 three other human caused wildfires have burned into the project area.

The potential environmental impacts from the Proposed Action Alternative and No Action Alternatives were evaluated in the Earthquake Fuels Project Environmental Assessment (EA) (DOI-BLM-NV-C010-2011-0520-EA). The Proposed Action Alternative has no known effects on the human environment. Based on the analysis of potential environmental impacts detailed in the EA, it was determined that the impacts associated with the Proposed Action Alternative were not significant. This is documented in the attached Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI).

DECISION

Based on the analysis in the Earthquake Fuels Project DOI-BLM-NV-C010-2011-0520-EA, it is my decision to implement the Proposed Action Alternative. The Proposed Action Alternative will create a fire resistant strip of vegetation along approximately 10 miles of dirt road east of Fairview Peak, in Churchill County, Nevada. The size of this unit is 1,659 acres. The restoration strategy will include a prescribed fire application to remove the existing plant material, a chemical treatment to control the annual weed (cheatgrass) invasion and a reseedling effort to create a more fire resistant plant community.

AUTHORITY

The Proposed Action Alternative is in conformance with the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) of 1976, the CRMP adopted in 2001 and with current BLM policies, plans and programs.

The Proposed Action is consistent in relationship to statutes, regulations and policies of neighboring local, county, State, tribal governments and other federal agencies.

PUBLIC INVOLVMENT

Written communication including a description of the Proposed Action and a map was provided to the Fallon Paiute-Shoshone Tribe on June 28, 2011. Consultation is ongoing. Internal scoping for the proposed Earthquake Fuels Project was initiated at the regularly scheduled Interdisciplinary Team meeting at the Carson District Office on June 13, 2011 and continued until July 8, 2011. A scoping letter was sent to the grazing permittee and the United States Navy on July 26, 2011. The letter included a summary and maps of the proposed project. Comments were requested by August 12, 2011. No comments were received. BLM issued a press release soliciting public comment on the proposed project and posted an information sheet for the project on the Carson City District Office's web page on August 3, 2011. Comments or issue identification were requested by August 15, 2011. No issues were identified. The EA was made available for public review and comment on August 22, 2011. The BLM comment period closed on September 22, 2011. The Nevada State Clearinghouse provided comments September 19, 2011. The Nevada Division of State Lands and the State Historic Preservation Officer support the proposal. The EA was made available by hard copy at the CCDO, and on the website at: http://www.blm.gov/nv/st/en/fo/carson_city_field/blm_information/nepa.html.

One comment letter was received during the review process from the Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW). NDOW supports the BLM's efforts at managing rangelands for ecological health. It is NDOW's recommendation to limit prescribed burning where desirable vegetation exists. This recommendation will be considered and incorporated in the design of the prescribed fire plan.

RATIONALE

Upon analyzing the impacts of the Proposed Action Alternative and following issuance of the EA for public review, I have determined that implementing the Proposed Action Alternative will not have a significant impact to the human environment and that an environmental impact statement is not required. Refer to the attached finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI).

APPROVAL

The Earthquake Fuels Project is approved for implementation.



Teresa J. Knutson, Manager

Stillwater Field Office

Carson City District Office


Date

APPEAL PROCEDURES

If you wish to appeal this decision, it may be appealed to the Interior Board of Land Appeals, Office of the Secretary, in accordance with 43 CFR Part 4. If you appeal, your appeal must also be filed with the Bureau of Land Management at the following address:

Teresa J. Knutson, Stillwater Field Manager
BLM, Carson City District Office
5665 Morgan Mill Road
Carson City, NV 89701

Your appeal must be filed within thirty (30) days from receipt or issuance of this decision. The appellant has the burden of showing that the decision appealed from is in error.

If you wish to file a petition pursuant to regulation 43 CFR 4.21 (58 FR 4942, January 19, 1993) for a stay (suspension) of the decision during the time that your appeal is being reviewed by the Board, the petition for stay must accompany your notice of appeal.

Copies of the notice of appeal and petition for a stay must also be submitted to:

Board of Land Appeals
Dockets Attorney
801 N. Quincy Street, Suite 300
Arlington, VA 22203

A copy must also be sent to the appropriate office of the Solicitor at the same time the original documents are filed with the above office.

U.S. Department of the Interior
Office of the Regional Solicitor
Pacific Southwest Region
2800 Cottage Way, Room E-1712
Sacramento, CA 95825

If you request a stay, you have the burden of proof to demonstrate that a stay should be granted. A petition for a stay is required to show sufficient justification based on the following standards:

1. The relative harm to the parties if the stay is granted or denied.
2. The likelihood of the appellants' success on the merits.
3. The likelihood of immediate and irreparable harm if the stay is not granted.
4. Whether the public interest favors granting the stay.

The Office of Hearings and Appeals regulations do not provide for electronic filing of appeals, therefore they will not be accepted.

